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Security Council

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Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Conclusions on children and armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire

1. At its 10th meeting, on 18 September 2007, the Working Group examined the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2007/515), introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire participated in the subsequent discussion.

2. The main elements of the exchange of views among the members of the Working Group are summarized below.

3. The members of the Working Group welcomed:

(a) The report of the Secretary-General;

(b) The close engagement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) with all parties;

(c) The visit of the Special Representative to Côte d'Ivoire in September 2007 and the cooperation of the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire with the Special Representative;

(d) The fact that there was no longer any substantiated evidence of active unlawful recruitment and use of children by armed groups, as well as the steady decrease in the association of children with such groups;

(e) The measures taken by the Forces nouvelles and the militia groups to cooperate with the United Nations and the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in the full implementation of the action plans agreed upon with the United Nations in November 2005 and September 2006, respectively, to end the association of children with their forces, including through regular in situ verification;

(f) The effectiveness of the system established by resolution 1612 (2005) in Côte d'Ivoire.

4. While noting that there had been a decline in reported cases of killings, and bearing in mind the difficulties of a post-conflict situation, the Working Group called upon the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire to make their best efforts to investigate

the crimes committed against children, to identify the perpetrators and to prosecute serious violations and abuses committed against children.

5. Some members of the Working Group stressed that crimes committed against children, particularly rape, killings and abduction, are generally perpetrated by civilian criminals who take advantage of the insecure environment and the lack of law and order. The onus remained on the parties to the conflict to address those violations in the context of their responsibility for the maintenance of security in the territories under their control. They expressed their wish for more specific information on the context and the perpetrators of crimes related in the report.

6. At the same time, the Working Group reiterated the grave concern that it had expressed at its 6th meeting on 8 November 2006 with regard to the persistent incidents of rape and other sexual violence against girls and the killing, maiming and abduction of children.

7. The Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire also welcomed the report of the Secretary-General. He reiterated that the armed forces of Côte d'Ivoire had never either recruited or used children. He welcomed the action plans of the militia groups and reasserted the commitment of the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire to cooperate further with the United Nations with a view to improving the situation of the children affected by armed conflict.

8. Further to the meeting and subject to and consistent with applicable international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1612 (2005), the Working Group agreed to the following.

Recommendations to the Security Council

9. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council address letters:

To the President and the Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire

(a) *Welcoming* their cooperation with the United Nations with a view to improving the situation of the children affected by armed conflict, in particular through the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, and further encouraging them to develop and establish, with the support of the United Nations, institutional arrangements to ensure that children are prioritized in the peace, reconstruction and development processes, including through the possible establishment of a national commission for children affected by armed conflict, in accordance with international law and taking into account the principles relating to the status of national institutions (see General Assembly resolution 48/134);

(b) *Reaffirming* the primary responsibility of all parties to armed conflict to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of affected civilians, including children, and calling upon them to ensure, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1765 (2007), that the protection of children is addressed in the implementation of the Ouagadougou political Agreement as well as in the post-conflict reconstruction and recovery phases;

(c) *Recalling* that the participants in the conference entitled "Free children from war", held in Paris on 5 and 6 February 2007 committed themselves to making every effort to uphold and apply the Paris Principles and Commitments to protect

children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups wherever possible in their political, diplomatic, humanitarian, technical-assistance and funding roles, consistent with their international obligations;

(d) *Urging* them to monitor closely the measures taken by all armed groups to cooperate with the United Nations and the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in the full implementation of the action plans agreed upon with the United Nations in November 2005 and September 2006, respectively, to end the association of children with their forces;

(e) *Expressing deep concern* about the current impunity for violations and abuses committed against children, and calling upon them to undertake and demonstrate concrete measures to address this concern, including the rigorous and timely investigation of incidents and prosecution of the perpetrators of crimes;

(f) *Expressing deep concern also* about the prevalence of sexual violence against children in Côte d'Ivoire, and urging them, as a matter of urgent priority, to prepare a national action plan to address this issue; such an action plan may include, where appropriate, a concerted awareness-raising campaign, training and capacity-building for enhanced protection and victim assistance, rigorous and timely investigation and prosecution of crimes of sexual violence;

(g) *Welcoming* the commitment made by Côte d'Ivoire at the 6th meeting of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on 8 November 2006 to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict as soon as practicable;

(h) *Taking note* of the fact that the parties to the armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire are no longer mentioned in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (see A/62/609-S/2007/757) as recruiting or using children, and expressing its intention to pay further due attention to the adherence by those parties to their commitments to halt the recruitment and use of children as well as to their granting the United Nations access to their military zones for verification;

To the Secretary-General

(i) *Requesting* that the United Nations country team continue to ensure effective follow-up to Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict as well as to the subsequent conclusions and recommendations of its Working Group, including through the further strengthening of monitoring and reporting of violations and abuses and by ensuring a coordinated response to this issue;

(j) *Recommending* that his Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict continue to work closely with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire with a view to providing any assistance that it may require;

(k) *Requesting* that his Special Representative transmit to the parties to the armed conflict mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/515) as soon as possible the message addressed to them by the Chairman of the Working Group.

10. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council address a message to the Parties to the armed conflict mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/515) through a public statement by the

Chairman of the Working Group transmitted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, specifically:

To the Secretary-General of the Forces nouvelles

(a) *Welcoming* the measures taken by the Forces nouvelles to cooperate with the United Nations and the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in the full implementation of the action plans agreed upon with the United Nations in November 2005 to end the association of children with their forces;

(b) *Calling upon* the Forces nouvelles to adhere to those commitments with the support, as appropriate, of the United Nations agencies involved in the Task-Force on Monitoring and Reporting, and to continue to grant the United Nations unhindered access to their military zones for verification;

(c) *Urging* them to pay special attention to initiatives to prevent and cope with violence committed against children, including rape and other grave sexual violence, and to report expeditiously any such crimes to the Ivorian child protection authorities, UNICEF and UNOCI;

(d) *Stressing* that their compliance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) will continue to be systematically monitored and reported by the relevant United Nations actors;

(e) *Taking note* of the fact that the Forces nouvelles are no longer mentioned in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (see A/62/609-S/2007/757) as recruiting or using children, and expressing its intention tb pay further due attention to the commitments made by them vis-à-vis the United Nations;

To the leaders of the Front pour la libération du Grand Ouest, the Alliance patriotique de l'ethnie Wé, the Union patriotique de résistance du Grand Ouest and the Mouvement ivoirien de libération de l'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire

(f) *Welcoming* the measures taken to cooperate with the United Nations and the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in the full implementation of the action plans agreed upon with the United Nations in September 2006 to end the association of children with their forces;

(g) *Calling upon* them to adhere to those commitments and to continue to grant the United Nations unhindered access to their military zones for verification;

(h) *Urging* them to pay special attention to initiatives to prevent and cope with violence committed against children, including rape and other grave sexual violence, and to report expeditiously any such crimes to the Ivorian child protection authorities, UNICEF and UNOCI;

(i) *Stressing* that their compliance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) will continue to be systematically monitored and reported by the relevant United Nations actors;

(j) *Taking note* of the fact that the Forces nouvelles are no longer mentioned in the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (see A/62/609-S/2007/757) as recruiting or using children, and expressing its

intention to pay further due attention to the commitments made by them vis-à-vis the United Nations.

Direct action by the Working Group

11. The Working Group also agreed to address a letter from its Chairman to the World Bank and donors requesting the provision of timely and adequate resources with a view:

(a) To strengthening reintegration programmes for demobilized Ivorian children, with due consideration to the longer-term requirements of such programmes for children;

(b) To supporting the Government of Côte d'Ivoire in the preparation and implementation of a national action plan to fight violence against children, including rape and other grave sexual violence.